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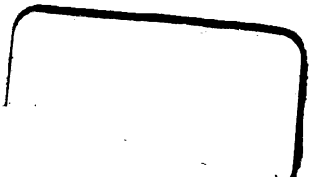
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SONGS WITHOUT ANSWER



BY IRENE PUTNAM



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

S.S.O.

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To Annette Bisbop.

I stray through the pleasant valley, I pause by the ancient tree ;
The mountains, the winds, and leaves, are the memories of thee.

The summers bring home the birds, yet thou wilt return no more,
No more to the mossy shades, or the river's tranquil shore.

The clouds pass over the mountains, they wonder where thou art,
And the mysteries float unuttered, thou lute of the woodland's heart !

Nevermore thou revealest the commerce of fairy things,
The tale of the wild brook's laughter, the haste of the white moth's wings.

The summers bring home the birds, yet none can repeat thy tone,
For a Spirit sang in thee, divine, remote, and alone.

Thy soul is my fairy mother, tho' flown to the Sun-down star;
These songs in my heart's low valley were charmed by thy spells afar.

PLEASANT VALLEY
ESSEX CO., N. Y.

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SONGS WITHOUT ANSWER

I

The Thrush.

AH, sorrow ! 't is a woodland hermit dead,
No more to chime the silver morning toll.
I 'll make a mossy tomb, a leaf-lined bed,
Sweet Mother Poesy, give me his soul !

Let not it wander in the winds forlorn,
To sigh with leaves, or with dark waters croon,
But sheltered in my bosom hail the morn ;
My heart desires it for an elfin boon.

Grant me his soul with all his moods to sing,
And wild interpretations of the sun,
With all the floating impulse of his wing :
Sweet Mother, find in me thy little one !

Give me his soul through Life's short summertide,
No more I 'll long to be of Glory heard,
But I would chant and listen at thy side,
O Heavenly Muse, like him, thy forest bird !

The Evening Star.

BEYOND the mountains' purple shade
The yellow fires of sunset fade;
The Evening Star shines pure and bright,
The wild thrush sings a last good-night.

His winding silvery tones prolong
To yon soft star their fairy song:
Night folds the vale with darker peace,
Oh, hark! those trembling flute-notes cease.

So when Life's rosy beams shall fail
And leave all dark in Earth's sweet vale,
My song, my last good-night shall be,
O Star of Love, to thee!—to thee!

In Winter.

THE Winter day is strong and pure
  Above the hills of iron woods,
I feel the mighty cold immure
  My soul in deep and patient moods.

What matter tho' the dreamed-of Spring
  Do never wake life's tender bloom?
What tho' the seasons' rounds shall bring
  For me, for me, but one gray gloom?

There 's yet a gift that I would own,—
  Life's ancient strength, austere, divine,
Like something in the ice-girt stone,
  And something in the wind-swept pine;

A power to praise the Winter stars
  Tho' all my veins be frost-represt,
To bear the burden and the scars
  And shield some snow-bird in my breast!

Lost Beauty.

SONGS there have been for maids that died in Spring,
That wore their wreaths of Beauty in the tomb,
But I, whose tone is but a sigh, would sing
Of Beauty's death, itself a withered bloom.

Some maids have died for grief, and down all time
Their Beauty like a silver lamp has shone,
But I would utter through my faltering rhyme
How Beauty died, and some sweet maids live on.

They had a Spring-born Beauty, rare and bright,
An early rainbow in a morn of tears,
Or under wings of clouds, the rosy light
That lingers like a trance and disappears.

Watch a bright bubble, see around its wall
The fairy colors pour and coil and stream,
A subtle darkness glides throughout them all,
The bubble breaks, alarmed by one sad dream ;

So Beauty vanished from their lips, their eyes,
  And from the tender mantle of their hair ;
When some black vision, some too stern surprise,
  Unlocked their souls' pavilion to Despair.

When mortal Beauty fades, then too expires
  An alchemy that moved and charmed the whole,
The rayless eyes without their starry fires
  Take on the solemn colors of the soul.

Where is thy unwreathed grave, O Beauty dead ?
  Thy bloom in no sweet picture hangs enshrined,
And they whose love thy sparkling glances fed
  Have strown thy gentle ashes from the mind.

No lover casts his garland where thou art,
  Entombed in void Oblivion's starless air,
Save only I,—this poem of my heart
  Will glide unto thy dust and tarry there.

Nocturne.

I WONDER who bade me awaken,
So still is the summer night,
And the moon by the curtain of willow
Is flooding my room with light.

The fountain's murmuring only,
The song of a wakeful bird,
Was it all?—but I dreamed an echo,
A sound of my name I heard.

What change is there wrought in heaven,
In regions of fate, afar?
Is the star of my destiny climbing
At last to her longed-for star?

I waked with such hope and sadness,
A sweet and divine unrest,—
The thrill of a rose when there hovers
A white moth over her breast.

The Mower.

HE went with the sunlight leaping
Over the hillside's rim,
And his curls were like meadow-lilies
Under his wide straw brim ;
His eyes like the chicory blossoms,
Blue, with their sky-born look,
His glad cheeks redder than clover
And brown as a sunny brook.
All day in the upland meadow
He swings my heart with his scythe.

Ah, slow sweet wind from the hilltop,
Hurry thy heavy wing !
Bring scent of his ferns and daisies,
And his whetstone's silver ring,
And lift the curls on his forehead
With thy fingers coy and free,
And whisper so low he hears not,
Whisper one thought of me !
All day in the upland meadow
He swings my heart with his scythe.

Does the meadow-lark cease her crooning
To trouble and watch him pass?
Does he startle the bobolincoln
From her nest in the dewy grass?
'T is only so, with his coming
He flutters my heart in her nest;
Ah, gentle and cruel, he stays not
And fain would he not molest!
All day in the upland meadow
He swings my heart with his scythe.

The lilies bow down before him,
The long grass shudders and starts,
The daisies faint with their fortunes
And secrets around their hearts.
With his stroke so swerveless and steady,
His forehead tranquil and sweet,
How little he cares what blossoms
Are sinking under his feet!
All day in the upland meadow
He swings my heart with his scythe.

The Morning Star.

LOW in the dim green heaven of dawn
The tremulous morning planet clings,
With pale and piercing radiance drawn
About her head like open wings.

She hangs in lustrous angel-hood,
Bright-quivering, gazing up the sky
As tho' with tears of joy she stood
For some immortal ecstasy ;

A spirit in the first release
Where Heaven and Shadow interflow,
Just entering in the flood of Peace
With that surprise which none foreknow.

Her Thought.

'T WAS all a silver moonlight,
The sky was starry blue,
The meadows plaited softly
Their hair with pearls of dew.
She leaned beside her window
And breathed a name of love,
Her wingéd Thought flew outward
The dewy fields above.

It crossed the waves of shadow,
A moth that knew no fear,
It hovered through one casement
And sought the sleeper's ear.
But there no love held vigil
To ope for love a door;
The wingéd Thought must wander
And wander evermore.

Now on her mossy headstone
The moonbeam glimmers white,

Where grasses long are braiding
  Their hair with pearls all night,
And now her soul in Heaven
  Throbs sweetly like a star,
Which hath no cause for sorrow
  On Earth's dim orb afar.

But where the dark trees whisper,
  And where the moon is bright,
A Thought of love yet wanders
  Upon the breeze of night;
Across the fields forever,
  Now shapen, and now lost,—
A breath,—a homeless fragrance,—
  A fairy or a ghost.

The Secret.

THERE is a secret that I long to tell,
It trembles on the threshold of my heart,
A treasure from the starry skies it fell,
I dare not let it from my breast depart.
'T is sweeter than the May-night breezes' sigh:
Ah, 't is a pure and blissful heavenly gleam!
But I will never breathe it till I die,
For if I tell, you 'll say it is a dream.

The roses know my secret from their birth,
The zephyrs chant it when they wander by;
They learned its beauty ere it fell to earth,
When 't was a star and hovered in the sky.
But never, never will I dare impart
My joy before your eyes have found its beam;
It trembles on the threshold of my heart,
But if I tell, you 'll say, "It is a dream!"

"Felice Notte!"

GOD send the little golden bees of sleep
To murmur in the blossom of your ear
Their gentle summer music hushed and deep,
Their softest slumber-songs to you, my dear!

And may the gypsy, fortune-telling dreams
Draw you beneath their painted tent and take
Your palm and tell you fortunes, rosy gleams
Too sweet to be remembered when you wake.

Once may your hyacinthine lids unfold
Calm in the pleasant glory of the moon,
The happiest stars in Heaven may you behold,
And pray, and sigh for joy, and slumber soon.

Bird Songs.

I SIT by my chamber window, this morning of
slow, soft rain,
And I hear from the mist-veiled woodland a wild
bird's delicate strain,—

A silvery, falling cadence, the tone of an elfin horn,
It dies in the deep rain-silence, and softly is soon
re-born.

Ah, who may declare that meaning, or who can
revive that stress
When it glides away in the closets of infinite leafi-
ness?

O mystical song of a bird! Ah, poem of wordless
lore,
A thousand summers chanted in ecstasy o'er and
o'er!

Such are my beautiful thoughts in my mist-veiled
heart that sing,

Over whose wordless tones the tears to my eyelids
spring.

I cannot divine their meaning, I may not revive
their song,
When they die away in the depth of a silence rapt
and long.

In that veiled and infinite forest, the realm of the
human mind,
They are chanted forever of old, and I am a bird in
the wind.

The Fairy Poetess.

From a painting by Annette Bishop.

THE pale stars climbed the mountains,
The leaves were hung with dew,
And all the moonlit meadows
Lay mild and silver-blue.
Across the level daisies
With crowns together prest,
There roamed a fairy, dreaming,
Her arms laid o'er her breast.

She roamed along the daisies,
No dewdrop feared her feet;
She wore, so gently moving,
A wreath of star-veil sweet.
The crickets played below her
Their fifes of even tone;
Serenely strayed the fairy
With filmy wings, alone.

Upon one daisy, turning,
  She worshipped moon and sky,
And heard no sound nor whisper
  Save when a moth flew by.
She made a fairy poem,—
  Ah, pure and fine and sweet!
I prithee, roving nightwind,
  For me that song repeat!

On the Lake.

THEIR molten hues the waters interchange,
The lake respires her soft, unsolaced sigh,
And far off loom the mountains—violet range
Of temples rapt in yonder fading sky!

The ripples sob and warble round the oars,
The ancient rocks re-echo young delight;
While from the woods and deep, embowered shores
With charm primeval comes the mellow Night;

Comes Night upon the loved, familiar lake,
With mild and solemn beauty as of old!
I hear what vows my blithe companions make,
In Memory's shrine of dreams this hour to hold.

But oh, diviner evenings I have known
Whose deep remembrance blinds my soul with tears,
Thou wert beside me,—gathered in my own
That faithful hand now lost amid the years!

The Mountains.

I SAW my mountain brothers, dark
  Against the pallid evening sky,
Whose amber with an emerald arc
  Died out in wan immensity.

Above their wave-like, lonely crests
  The early evening planet shone,
The ancient outline of their breasts
  More melancholy-great was grown.

It moved my heart until the sigh
  Of wandering air companion found,
To see Earth's patient mountains lie
  Along the vague, transparent bound.

I thought of Man, who evermore
  In changeless longing dark and lone
Uplifts his ancient prayers before
  The All-Divine, the All-Unknown.

The Dead Bird.

OH, where have fallen now
The melodies of pearl he loved to fling
From airy path and tasselled bough
And glad the heart of Spring?
They now are chimed amid the brook's wild tune;
Young crickets learn them from the grass of June.

Where now his feathers wee
That warmed his atom of an angel's heart,
And trembled to his ecstasy?
From April sods they start
In downy wood-flowers, pink and purple dim,
Between old fallen leaves that played with him.

Where now, ah, where is fled
His fairy ghost, all joy and poesy?
It sang to God,—and is not dead!
It haunts his favorite tree,
Or floats, a wandering, fragrant breath of joy,
By stars, through leafy dells, through breast of bird or boy.

The Honeysuckle.

FROM the low, brown roof pours singing
The heavy rain,
On the old gray door-stone ringing
Her silver again.
Unseen is the end of the meadow
With the warm, swift veil,
The room is full of a shadow,
The windows are pale ;
And the scent of the honeysuckle
Enters the door,
The old pink honeysuckle
In blossom once more !

'T was a shower like this in a June-time
Long faded and gone,
He tarried till almost noon-time
Waiting the sun :
And my heart like a bird in my bosom
Sang to the cloud,

Like the honeysuckle in blossom
To bar him it bowed ;
And the scent of the honeysuckle
Came in at the door,
The old pink honeysuckle
In blossom once more.

His voice was careless and mellow
Like the murmuring shower,
His locks were as happy and yellow
As a sun-covered flower ;
And when he strode out in the shimmer
With light on his brow,
Behind him the daylight sank dimmer,
'T was lonely as now ;
And the scent of the honeysuckle
Came in at the door,
The old pink honeysuckle
In blossom once more.

The rain with her sighing and ringing
Seems full of his tone,
His words from the long past bringing
As I sit here alone ;
And under the low, gray ceiling
Gleams out and is lost

His form from the shadow stealing,
  While sweet, like his ghost,
The scent of the honeysuckle
  Enters the door,
The old pink honeysuckle
  In blossom once more!

Fairy Stories.

ALL we had before, we have; do not weep, my heart;
Then thou didst believe it truly? What a child thou art!
That was just a fairy story, and I always knew,
Solemnly as Hope might whisper, it would not come true.

Hush thy sobs, my baby heart,—I will sit with thee
Hearing fairy-tales again, huddled round Hope's knee;
Only never trust them, dear; laugh and say, "I know,
Granny Hope, your fairy stories!—nothing happens so."

The Night-Song.

THE road winds through the woodland,
Sweet wild flowers scent the air,
The blue-eyed old musician
Goes homeward from the fair.
'T is midnight, and in slumber
The dreaming forest sighs,
The moon with mellow brightness
O'ermantles earth and skies.

The white-haired old musician
Melodious fancy sways,
And sitting near the roadside
His violin he plays ;
He plays with passion tender,
Now sadness, now delight,
The story of the forest,
The stars, the summer night.

With face upturned and spell-rapt,
He plays on sobbing strings

Of all those fairy secrets
The little wild-bird sings ;
He plays the dance of elfins
That frisking come and go,
Of dewy leaves which tremble,
Of brooks that murmur low.

The night-breeze while it wanders
Takes on the music lone,
And through one cottage casement
It wafts the fading tone ;
A maiden wakes and wonders
If angels near her be,
And saith, " My own belov'd one
Dreams now perchance of me."

In the South.

I WANDER in a Southern land
Beside a Western sea,
And starry flowers are in my hand
With fond, strange eyes for me.

'T is sunset, and the keen, blue hills
Grow flushed with purple rose,
So wild, so pure, as tho' heaven's rim
Did Fairyland disclose.

'T is sunset o'er the mighty sea,
And flames the royal sky;
A rosy shadow walks with me
And hears my happy sigh.

O Summer, Summer, is it thou?
When last we said good-bye,
Above the dark old Northern hills
How crimson flushed the sky!

Above the dark old Northern hills
How mute was evening grown,
Where long ago the whippoorwills
Their mellow cries had thrown!

I leaned upon the gold-leaved tree,
And down the valley gray,
I saw from hollow, field, and wood,
The ghosts of autumn stray.

And in the south and in the west
Thy glory waned and waned,
A brown leaf in an empty nest,
I, lonely I, remained.

But now, upon earth's Western rim,
Beside the Sunset Sea,
O Summer, Summer, is it thou
Whose spirit walks with me?

Thy starry blossoms fill my hand,
Thy hand my longing thrills,
Come home, come home to my old land
Among the Northern hills!

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA.

The Sea-Birds.

AN hour in the calm the boat lay rocking
On the mild and awful Pacific sea,
And the beautiful birds of the deep came flocking;
They cried in their salt, wild tones to me.

They were billed with amber, and silver-breasted,
With long gray wings with a band of snow;
Like fans snow-white, as their red feet rested
Fleet on the slippery swell below.

They circled high in the calm, veiled heaven,
They glided low to the solemn sea,
They swung in the long waves' hollow haven,
And called with their salt, hoarse tones to me.

And I flung white bread on the glassy waters,
My heart grew laughing for love and pride
That the infinite Ocean's sons and daughters
Out of my palm could be gratified.

I felt the approval of sky soft-laden,
  Of lapping wave and of lonely isle,—
I felt the approval of fond mermaiden,
  The sun's and the moon's and the ocean's smile.

They fled away and forgot their lover,
  Beautiful wave-like, wind-like things!
But I will remember, the wide world over,
  Their silvery breasts, and their swirl-bent wings.

And my heart is glad, when the blue rim dances
  On and under the sun-flame red,
Or the great mild sea in the morning glances,
  I have shared with the wild sea-children bread!

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA.

Silence.

SLOW songless moods of joy my soul oppress
To-day, between the drifts of summer hills;
I feel an angel's wavering hand caress
My silent heart that only sighing thrills.

O silent heart, thou art an unstrung lyre,
Whose buried tones forever long to be!
Ah, sweet and hapless now thy dumb desire,
The heavenly touch is groping over thee.

Why bendest thou to this, O Muse divine?
The groves are full of birds,—yet I adore;
And can but murmur like yon wind-swept pine,
One hoarse, ethereal whisper evermore.

The Child-Poet.

HE is but a nestling bird
  Cradled with his brethren wee,
Where the leaves are always stirred
  By the winds of heaven and sea.

Nest-mates slumber downy-dim,
  He with lucent, rolling eyes
Watches o'er the gray nest's rim
  Leaves that cover earth and skies;

Sees with simple eyes profound,
  Motion, form, and mystic sign,
Hearkens through their murmuring sound
  Voices from the Vast Divine;

Faintly tries in feeble tone
  Tiny songs of quavering stress,
Plaintive pipings all his own,
  Sweet and fine with feebleness.

Nature, mighty Mother, hears,
  Saith, "Sing on, thou little voice!
From the Fount which Earth reveres,
  Thou shalt make her groves rejoice."

Night Watches.

IN hours of waking sorrow,
Before the night is spent,
While the unattained To-morrow
Shifts on her vanward tent,
From my window I behold
The starry bands arise,
In eternal march outrolled,
The armies of the skies.

When I lapse from heavy dreaming
Once more to dark unrest,
New powers are risen gleaming
Above the world's sad breast;
Old hosts in solemn light,
Serenely faint and grand,
Obey through unknown night
Their unknown God's command.

And through my breast there trembles
Some deep, forgotten song,

Whose martial chord resembles,
"Be strong, thou soul, be strong!"
Some ancient battle-cry
The human heart has known,
Since first, 'neath awful sky,
Man watched the stars alone.

Reigned there no God above me,
Yet, had my spirit might,
The very stars would love me,
And draw me to their height.
Forever marching by,
The solemn hero-throng,
Give Man their old reply,
"Be strong, thou soul, be strong!"

Falling Leaves.

O FLYING leaves, strown down the darkened grove,
O falling, falling leaves, blown through the cold, strange air,
Drift on,—I am a leaf in my despair!
Bring back the summer birds, and I will bring back Love.

Forth from the silver-hanging willow's shroud,
Calling, he flew like some divine, rose-breasted swan,—
Gray are the boughs that once he sang upon,
The long, wild, ghostly woods are filled with deepening cloud.

No tender fluting in the dreary wind!
No soft and rosy form on any barren bough!
Summer and birds and Love are flown, and so,
Forlorn, lost, frightened, wingless, we drift on behind;

Drift, whirl, and hasten down the darkened grove,
Hither and thither sink with every falling gust.
Drift, falling leaves, fly on till fall we must;
Bring back the summer birds, and I will bring back Love!

The Stone.

UPON the pasture hill-brow
There lies a granite stone,
Where thousand generations
Of forest trees were grown,
And in some vast old summer
From wigwam rude and lone
An Indian Woman came to lean
Upon that mighty stone.

Deep shadows hung around her
Below the dark-winged trees,
There spread a lake beneath her,
Blue sister of the breeze;
She sat by many a sundown,
Arms crossed upon her knees,
While vague, primeval whispers moaned
And stirred the mossy trees.

Her wells of tears unnumbered,
Her fancy vague and lone

Soft-roaming through the twilight,
Few inner gleams her own.
What mused she while she bended
Beside that ancient stone,
And saw the grand bright stars arise
Above the earth-rims lone?

The blue lake is departed—
Ay, ages long ago!—
The forests all supplanted
By fields and farmsteads low,
And yet upon that hillside
The scented wild ferns grow,
And ring that stone with lichens laid
As in the Long Ago!

And still by mournful sundowns
Beside the granite stone,
When through the yellow upland grass
The cold long breezes moan,
And dark in gold and violet sky
The hills are dreaming lone,
I think the Indian Woman comes
To lean upon that stone.

The Pine.

DARK pine, I see thee on thy rock,
The evening star is new a-shine,
The cold green west thy branches lock,
Thou gnarled and great, thou hero Pine!

So still thou art with arm upthrown,
Thy ancient pose of solemn thought,
Some inward precept strong and lone
That calm of hundred years has wrought.

There sweeps a rush of mountain wind,
Thy branches toss with sudden cry;
Some memory stirs within thy mind
Nor years nor thought have made to die.

Consolation.

SWEET charms descend with sudden wings
That strangely glance our dreary thoughts between,
And give me faith in airy things
And fairy powers unseen.

Autumnal were my dreams, the grief
Of dropping woods, and meadows wan and dry,
And of the solitary leaf
Held blackly on the sky.

One pallid star illumed the west
As out of Heaven, serene and far, it shone;
The dark earth seemed an empty nest
With all her gladness flown.

I dried away the swelling tear
Twice, mournfully,—when, fresh and wild, I heard

From naked cherry bushes near
  The Spring-song of a bird.

So ghostly sweet, so rare, it welled
  In that gray Autumn twilight far from Spring,
Her breath my very spirit held
  To hear a spirit sing.

It ceased,—and yet,—I do not know
  What echo moved my soul,—faint jubilee,
And soft mysterious joy, as tho'
  Sweet Powers had thought on me!

The Old Tune.

WITH sad face turned aside, lest sudden comers see her weep,
She sits, her fingers softly trying on the ivory keys,
To find a half-forgotten way,—that memories
May soothe her yearning spirit into dreamful sleep.

And now the old tune rises,—trembles,—slowly stealing round
That empty room, where often in the other years
It sang its love and tenderness, and gathered tears
To eyes that weep no more,—ah, sweetest, hallowed sound!

Wistful.

AH, roses, tell me the secret
Of the old Earth's heart of Spring,
How from her mighty bosom,
All things return to blossom,
And still she hath in her bosom
What my summers used to bring!

O swallows, tell me the secret
Of the blue serene above,
For my heart is tender and lonely,
And my angels are there, and I only
Am sitting solemn and lonely
Thinking of old, old love!

White Rose.

WHITE Rose, so near the gate,
Does she pass out and in?
The summer twilight long and late,
When whippoorwills begin
Their swift and mellow cries
Below the veiled blue skies,
Does she pass out and in?

White Rose, that scent of thine
So rare and sweet and old,
'T is some perception half divine
Thy petals pure enfold,
A sense of Heavenly things
Thy line from Eden brings
So rare and sweet and old.

Then does her spirit come,
As in the Long Ago,
Around the old, sweet-gardened home
To wander to and fro?

When dew is on the grass
Along that path to pass
  As in the Long Ago?

Dost thou not talk with her,
  White Rose, so near the gate,
When her pale angel-garments stir
  The twilight deep and late?
O while she bends above,
Then whisper love,—*my* love,—
  White Rose, so near the gate!

In May.

HE found her crossing through the green May meadow,
With trailing feet beside the noisy stream,
Oh, brown and lonely as a flowerless shadow,
When like the sun he dawned upon her dream!

Bewildered, tremulous, at his tone she started
With piteous flush, a meek and guilty thing,
As tho' he should be wroth that she, still-hearted,
Dared veil his image 'neath her spirit's wing.

He walked beside her, speaking not unkindly,
The brook sang wild, the sun was red and low;
She trod upon the clustered violets blindly,
In some strange Heaven,—her heart was beating so.

He pitied her young frame worn gaunt and weary,
The little patient fingers overwrought,
Like some poor beast untimely strained and dreary,
"And this is all Life holds for her!" he thought.

And briefly by the long white road they parted,
And with a whistle lightly home he strode,
Nor did he guess how she went balmy-hearted,
His look a rainbow over all the road.

In the Garden.

I LINGERED in that sweet old garden
By the summer's late and balmy dusk,
My thoughts grew charmed with odors blending
From dew-bathed mignonette and musk.

My mood was mingled with the blossoms',
For whom all summers interflow;
And with their scent I journeyed backward
To evenings hundred years ago.

There moved a ghost in that dim garden,
I saw her through the soul of flowers;
She floated while her pale robes trembled
Along the leaves in misty showers.

She seemed a gentle maiden, leaning
To lift a blossom here or there,
Her neck, her arms, were dreamy whiteness,
And dark as twilight trees, her hair.

Her tresses veiled her drooping visage
That ever half aside she raised,
Her gown was gray with rosy pallor
That dimly faded while I gazed.

A breath from far mysterious regions
About her softly seemed to blow,
I knew there strayed in that old garden
A spirit from the Long Ago.

She vanished through the twilight's curtain,
As when sweet dreams our souls forget ;
And all the summer eve around me
Was rare with musk and mignonette.

Unsung.

I LONG to sing one golden hour unsung,
An hour which brought no fate among the years,
A sweetness dead whose knoll was never rung,
A sunset where the Past no banner rears.

Beside the door she sat when work was done,
The royal tiger-lilies glowed in shade,
Across the mountain's brow the sinking sun
His golden shaft of lessening glory laid.

Her cheek was on her gentle, toil-worn hand ;
Her gray translucent eyes with stillness bright
Received the vale, the purple mountains grand,
The emerald forest, the departing light.

Her eyes received,—while deep within her heart
Emotion swelled poetic and divine,—
Sweet thoughts, sweet hopes, like bubbles where they start
Upon the wild brook's fervor crystalline.

Sweet thoughts ! sweet hopes !—Too wild and pure to be,
They died unwhispered in her patient breast ;
But one soft hour they struggled to be free,—
Her day was sinking o'er the mountain-crest.

The New Moon.

FAR in the rosy sunset fading,
Near to the night-black mountain pines,
Silvery, slender, with viewless lading
The fairy sail of the New Moon shines.

Steering out of the heavens hither
Over yon infinite airy sea,
Thou and thy trailing star together,
What dost thou carry, O Moon, for me?

Over the round, wide world thou goest;
All the secrets of all are thine!
Moon, sweet Moon, if my wish thou knowest,
Bring, ah, bring me that boon for mine!

Look, my wish if my tongue could name it,
Boats can bear from no earthly shore;
Only the starry Fates can frame it
Yonder, deep in the evermore.

All the stars are so strange and olden,
  Wonderful islands, wide apart ;
Sure, in one of their havens golden
  Bides the dream of my waiting heart.

Still with no rude impatience wronging,
  I can wait for a thousand years ;
Ah, New Moon,—but I 'm longing, longing ;
  Now thou tremblest in two deep tears !

The Maiden-Hair.

O MAIDEN-HAIR, that in this covert place
Dost float on air thy fronds of circled grace,
Where forest sunbeams, golden-green with gloom,
The fairy life-net of thy veins illume!

Thou wing-like form, thou sweet poetic plan,
Divine, self-poised, beyond the search of man,
How frail thy raiment from the mould is wrought,
How strong in thee shines Beauty's perfect thought!

Thou hangest like a sign upon the door
Of unknown realms, while entrance, nothing more,
Thou makest on the dim, material scene,—
Oh, tell me of that Inner World's serene!

My dull, dark thoughts, like satyrs round the feet
Of heavenly Una, list for knowledge sweet;
I crave new sense of Beauty, Law, and Good,
Oh, teach me, gentle fern-soul of the wood!

Good-Night.

ALONG black maze of the weeping willow
The moon is thridding so golden-white;
She pours dim splendor upon my pillow
Passing my window to say good-night.
Good-night, says her little sister.

Moon so tender, ah, moon so shining,
Far, far up in the arch of skies,
Seest thou me as I watch reclining,
Beaming with tranquil starry eyes?
Good-night, says thy little sister.

I am so little, I lie in my chamber
Drooping my eyelids under thy light;
Thou and the stars our Lord lets wander
Round the world and all through the night.
Good-night, says thy little sister.

I must slumber so soft and lowly
Laid alone in the dark down deep;

Moon, if thou meetest the angels holy
Bid them pass where I lie asleep.
Good-night, says thy little sister.

Into the bells of the blossoms prying,
When thou comest where sweet dreams be,
Or on the back of the gray moths flying,
Bid them whisper themselves to me.
Good-night, says thy little sister.

Now I am kissing thy glory tender,
Angel moon, in the Lord's deep skies!
One more look at thy lovely splendor,
Now I am closing my drowsy eyes.
Good-night, says thy little sister.

Mountain Rain.

IN the rain, the mountain rain,
Wag and drip the forest leaves ;
'Neath his dark, pearl-dropping eaves
Chants the thrush a spirit strain.
Now the mountain brooklet wild
Leaps laughing like a fairy's child
In the mountain rain.

In the rain, the mountain rain,
Waters from the mossy ledge
Trickle off the rock's black edge
On the ferns that swing again.
Clustered rare and pure and slim
The wood-nymphs laugh in caverns dim,
In the mountain rain.

In the rain, the mountain rain,
Through its gray and quivering lines
Pearl-strung loom the purple pines ;

Secrets in their hearts have lain
Gathered long from winds and skies
That now float forth in fragrant sighs
In the mountain rain.

In the rain, the mountain rain,
Steams the spicy forest mold
Rich with fallen summers old.
Balmy mist-wreaths rise and wane
Clinging to the clouds that trail,
And passing on like phantoms pale,
In the mountain rain.

Winter Sunset.

THE winter sunset paints the snow
With fading rosy dye,
A little hut lies dark and low
Against the crimson sky.

It seems so plaintive, lone, and still
In sunset's royal tinge,
Where apple-trees o'ertop the hill
Like torn and tangled fringe.

It minds me of the patient heart
In human dwellers old,
Who watch their sun of life depart
In death's mysterious cold.

Under the Pines.

ON the rock sun-warm and hoary,
Meek as the moss I lie
And list to the pines' soft story,
Their whisper of earth and sky;

Till my heart grows hushed in its crying
For that melody long and mild
Seems the voice of the mother sighing
A lullaby o'er her child.

Ah, Nature, my Mother, bring me
A calm for my inward tears,
A song for my lost one sing me,—
My change in thy changeless years.

The Dryad's Serenade.

THE hermit-thrush half-sleeping
Lies cradled in her nest,
Frail, pearly treasures keeping
With freckled silver breast;
There breathes among the branches
A music softly played,
The oak-leaves all are violins
For that sweet serenade.

'T is now the Dryad singing,
Her changeful wandering tone
Begins like waters ringing
From mossy stone to stone.
It sinks, it swells, and ranges
In starry trebles high,
Now loud, now faint, and wanders down
Like one ethereal sigh.

Her night-black trailing tresses
Reveal her moonlit brow,

One stately arm caresses
The old, nest-laden bough.
"Sleep on," she saith, "my birdling!
Sweet joy to shelter thee,
Whose babes shall tune in years to come
Their silver prayers for me!"

The Antlers.

JUST between the firelight and the gloom,
From the wall those grand gray antlers loom
Rosy-tinted with the wavering glow.
Years and years above that old brown door
Lean the gnarled and stately branches o'er
Hunters' talk and women's work below.

Looking on those wild proud woodland things
I have sat with soft imaginings
Till they seemed the spirit of the deer,
Captive near the narrow ceiling bound,
With the loud hot room engirded round
Ever dreaming of his forest sphere;

Dreaming of the trail of dewy leaves
As he wandered 'neath his woodland eaves,
And the fragrance of the wilderness.
Dreaming of the dark and secret spring,
Of the mountain lake's inwooded ring,
Of the forest spirit's white caress.

When the door swings open with a sweep
Of cool freshness, then those liquid, deep,
  Luminous, proud eyes seem glistening there,
Straining outward for the glimpse of night
Where the dark old forest from the height
  Sends her greetings on that wave of air.

The Tiger-Lily.

UPON a hill forlorn, where only pass
The viewless winds that fleeing utter moan,
You see a group of graves, with mountain grass,
Wild, sear, and trembling, wanly overgrown.

Dull are the aspects of the stones unread,
They would as lief lie down, as blankly bear
Their legends to the sun, because the dead
For memory now no longer crave nor care.

Yet,—flame mysterious!—on a single grave
A tiger-lily stands, of contour keen,
Strange flower to grace a tomb, superb and brave
And blazing with an arch, triumphant mien.

Then one was not content?—and could that mold
Unwilling to forego the vanished dower
Of light and beauty in its burial old,
Call back the Soul to urn it in a flower?

Parting.

OCTOBER'S sunset fire grows chill,
A black-haired frost will walk to-night,
Whose icy hand must work thee ill,
O dainty phlox-bloom tall and white!
And now, sweet flower, the butterfly
Descends to say his last good-bye.

O butterfly, will ever morrow
Unite thee with this flower again?
I feel a pang of elfin sorrow
To watch the tender, loving twain!
They symbolize Love's parting old,
And tragic fates by singers told.

The cold, thin sunlight disappears,
The winged lover drifts away,
The air seems full of dewy tears,—
O sad and stately flower, I pray
Good fairies take your souls to-night
To Fairyland's immortal light!

A Flower-Song.

THROUGH the veiled midsummer meadows, where the purple grass-heads sway,
In a morn of rainless shadows, like a happy child I stray,
Plucking blossoms pink and golden, nodding flowers of blue and white,
In a dream, with rapture olden, with primeval pure delight.

Meadow-Sweet so soft and tender! Pale-starred vines that knot and bind!
Cardinal-Flower of queenly splendor! Harebells born of mountain wind!
Daisies white and daisies yellow, tossing through the filmy maze!
Milkweeds honey-sweet and mellow, where the wild bees lose their ways!

Roaming with primeval gladness in the dark and dreamy morn,

I forget my human sadness and the mind within me born.

Happy blossoms lightly holden,—'t is the joy of Mother Eve!

Now I move in ages golden, ere the soul was taught to grieve.

The Winds.

IN cool of dusk there rise
  The sun-warmths of the vale,
Gray winds from saffron skies
  Descend their mountain-trail,—
The winds that all day roam
  On tranquil mountain heads,
Mild herds that follow home,
  Descend from ferny beds.

The odors of the blue
  All day they browsed among,
And drank aërial dew
  Whereof no tale is sung ;
They cropped the fine wild scents
  Of mountain grass and herb
And moss in carven dents
  Of rock where none disturb.

With faint low-tinkling bells
  They saunter down the gloom,

They halt by leafy swells
  And then their paths resume;
The winds that all day roam
  On tranquil mountain heads,
Mild herds that follow home,
  They seek their valley-beds.

To that old house they bring
  Their milk of mountain leaves,
Their long gray horns they swing
  About the low dark eaves.
A maiden-soul was there,
  Pure as the evening star,
She drank their nectared air
  In the old years afar.

They shed around her sleep
  The joy of mountain flowers,
That soul of longings deep
  They gave ethereal powers.
She laid her brow and hair
  Their dim gray necks along,
And soothed their toss and stir
  With wild unwhispered song.

But now they find no more
  Their mistress and their friend,

Winter Rain.

I LIST that low, primeval cry
Of rain at midnight rushing,
It seems to bear the world's old sigh
For griefs in Time's deep hushing,
The ancient rain, the old, old tears,
Which sank below the buried years.

O sobbing, deep, mysterious sound,
I let my fancy follow
Slow drops that ooze by gulfs profound
To earth's remotest hollow!
I think of tears for hopeless pain
The sunlight never finds again.

Such tears are shed this very hour
In many a heart's recesses,—
December drops that feed no flower,—
No aspiration blesses.
What winter nights of thousand years
Hath darkness poured her unseen tears!

I list that low primeval sigh
  Of rain at midnight sobbing,
Deep waves of inmost harmony
  Through all the gusts float throbbing ;—
Faint songs of stars, tho' far, they seem
To make this world a tale, a dream !

The Idiot's Soul.

THE tenants of the barren room below
Seem a poor madman, mouthing with no speech,
And five dull maids who stumble to and fro
With feeble shrunken limbs that crawl and reach.

The fool gapes blindly through the windows dim,
Or gibbers by the door; the cripples tread
With clumsy feet to wait upon his whim,
And no one dreams of tenant overhead.

The attic room is full of changeless night,
The window barred,—a never-opened door,—
Vague, empty, cold,—a few faint gleams of light
Steal through the narrow chinks along the floor.

There kneels a patient, snow-white angel thing
Sent hither down from Heaven so long ago;
With folded hands, her head beneath her wing,
She waits on God, nor suffers joy nor woe.

The winds have never roughed a silken plume,
  Rain never beat her sad serenity,
The black, unpitying walls in all their gloom
  Have saved her when the unclean foe was nigh.

When Death and Life shall burst that prison door,
  So pale, so pure, the Soul will leave her rest,
Unfurl her wings with angel song once more,
  And calmly soar unto her Saviour's breast.

The Night.

MY eyes are hot and weary
With darkness, not with light;
I 'm learning, oh, I 'm learning
God's secret of the Night!

The secret of those portals
Men call the bars of fate!
O heart, how many thousands
Are beating on that gate!

Those iron walls the spirit
Can never wear away,
Because her hands are muffled
With dulness and decay.

What human souls have clamored
And tossed in anguish there,
Down all the world of ages,
With passion and despair!

Thou, too, wild heart, must calm thee
Before that moveless Might.
I 'm learning, oh, I 'm learning
God's secret of the Night!

Longing.

GRAY world of longing wintry boughs,
That dream of Spring, the Sun's return,
With grief more cold around my heart
I cannot all my dream unlearn!

Once on my life he passing shone,
But went his strong unfaltering way,
With Summer waiting on his will
He left my vale so poor, so gray.

Sad world of longing wintry boughs,
I pine with you for Spring's return,
And still he may not come, and still
I cannot all my dream unlearn.

Because the chambers of my soul
Are full of blind, unanswered pain
Since one brief sun-tide long ago,
I dream my Sun will shine again.

It may be when your lord wends home
With gold for every lifted palm,
My lord of life shall also come
To brim my cup with joy and balm.

Perhaps a thousand Springs must fade,
But we shall meet in earth's glad tomb,
Perhaps upon some distant star
My being to his smile shall bloom.

Nature.

MY heart is weary of her care,
My eyes are dark with tears unshed;
Kind Nature through the pleasant air
Lays loving hand upon my head,
She murmurs round my spirit's door,
"Thou little bird, be sad no more!

"The sunlight glads the aged trees,
More winters they, than thou, have known;
Their laughter rises on the breeze
With mellow, deep, and endless tone.
Thou, too, my friend, my fondling art,
Oh, would my voice might free thy heart!

"Oh, would that I might comfort thee
Among the mosses, on my breast,
Or in some bird's nest cradle thee
And teach thee joy and songs and rest!
And teach thee how the summers grow,
Yet, ah, what human heart may know!"

I lean my head upon her hand,
  I whisper, "Mother, tho' I be
Too sad and weak to understand,
  Yet sing, ah, sing, and comfort me!'
And softly sings she o'er and o'er,
"Thou little bird, be sad no more!"

The Star.

THE solemn star by her chamber window
Passed, night by night,
Climbing over the tangled treetops
The dark blue height,
Ever beholding its own reflection
In those clear eyes,
As in meadow-pools, the peaceful and lonely,
Its shimmer lies.

Her pure cheek resting upon her pillow,
Her long dark hair
Drawn in smoothness beside her temples,
She breathed her pray'r.
Ah, year by year, what story, what import
From soul to star,
From star to soul, through the holy ether
Passed clear and far?

Now no more from her little window
There shines a light,

But over her grave the dewy grasses
Sigh to the night,—
O star, thou star, in the deep blue heavens
Journeying yet,
Dost thou not know her, dost thou not feel her,
Or canst thou forget?

Her soul of order, the poised, unswerving,
The drawn of God,
Were it moved from its course, and melted and mingled
With ashes and sod,
Wouldst thou aye look down, so pure and so steadfast,
Through the groundless deep,
Nor turn in thy path for thy lost little sister
To waver and weep?

Departed.

"When scarce was remembered
Kilmeny's name,
Late, late in a gloamin
Kilmeny came hame."

SO dimly smiles her portrait from the wall,
The only relic of her mortal grace,
The illuming eyes that pleased and captived all,
The arch and glowing, fancy-changeful face!
Few heed the lonely image in its place,
Her painted eyes have no updrawing power,
Save when their mournful quiet doth embrace
Some aged mind in Memory's tranquil hour,
With slow thoughts bearing home the years' long-vanished dower.

She had a voice of frank and simple art
As ever chanted in Arcadian dream;
She sang old songs that played the listeners' heart
In summer darkness, or by firelight's gleam.
That voice is flown far, far beyond the stream

Of Silence washing by our spirits' door,
  Its only remnant in that house may seem
Worn leaves of song no longer handled o'er,—
In some old heart a sense of sweetness heard no
    more.

She loved,—it was a kindness veiled, unknown,
  That beat with tremulous pinions in her breast.
Death bore her hence before the dream was flown,
  Or any cunning mind its secret guessed.
  What relic of that buried love may rest?—
In some dull corner of the attic laid,
  There is a book of verse, wherein lie prest
Old flowers so pallid now they cease to fade,
They are the ghosts of sighs her soul in stillness
    made.

A Dying Weed.

BARE the rock, and gray, and dry ;
On its brow in dusty need,
Burnt below a flame-blue sky
Withers one poor pasture weed.

Thou who nourishest the sun,
Hear Thy weed that mourns and sighs,
Bless Thy little thirsty one
While on earth's old rock she dies.

Thou hast cleft this sullen stone,
Gathered soil on many a wind,
Wingéd seed aforetime strown
Guided here its birth to find.

Though her bud shall never flower,
Though her Thought shall never be,
Though she perish in an hour,
God, the gray weed worships Thee !

Let her ashes, where she dies,
  Make the scanty dust the more,
So a stronger herb may rise
  To rejoice and to adore!

Home to Life's enfolding deep,
  Tiny drop of Life, she runs,
Where the joyful billows leap
  Round the shore of worlds and suns.

At the Moon-Dial.

MOON, in thy cloudless hall of glory,
Softly gazing on sad-eyed me,
Hark, I 'll whisper one more love-story,
Mother of secret sighs, for thee!

Moon, with thy stately passion moving,
Proud and holy as Britomart
Lone in the land of Faerie roving,
One pure dream in her love-pierced heart,

Maids have shown thee their fancy's treasure
Evermore since the world was young;
Vain, sad longing, and balmy pleasure,
Thou hast glimmered their tears among!

Pity me too from thy hall of glory,
Bathe thy beams in my eyelids' dew;
Hark, I 'll whisper one more love-story,
I, less fair, but as fond and true.

Moon, I love with a love despairing,
He from my fate is so high, so far ;
Shy, sad heart ! in its tender daring,
'T were all one that I loved a star.

When the rose blooms out on the willow,
When the nightingale weds the tree,
When a king makes the moss his pillow,
Then may the lord of my dreams love me.

Nevermore will I cease to love him,
Fain would I serve him ; yet, wide apart,
I can but pray the sweet heavens above him
Blessings to pour till they brim his heart.

Mother Moon, teach thy daughter lowly
Shining sorrow like thine to wear,
Love's own patience, serene and holy,
Beaming over my heart's despair !

The Forest Spring.

BY the spring serene and pure,
Drink I from this glad wild leaf,
Nature, let thy waters cure
In my heart love's burning grief.

O my Mother, I am thine;
Touch my soul, and love shall be
Like a fountain crystalline,
Like thy woodland well, in me!

All things issue from thy breast,
Thou in all thy brood hast reign,
I am weary of unrest
And the troubling, secret pain.

Make my love God's forest spring,
Let the sobbing turmoil cease,
Bind it with a fairy ring
Lonely, pure, and full of peace.

Let the stricken fainting deer
  Find refreshing in my love,
Let the song-birds bathe them here,
  And the wild bees hum above.

Let it for no longing shrink
  Into Self, but full and sure
Offer to thy wanderers drink
  While the Hills of Life endure.

Be my love thy sacred well,
  Then thy wounded child shall know
Why within her dearest dell
  Brake this wild and throbbing woe ;

Tho' my King, my Hunter, wending,
  Never find the secret place,
Never, o'er the fountain bending,
  Smile to see his mirrored face.

After the Rain.

O WILD bird, singing after the warm, sweet rain
With fountain of tremolo gushes, wild and glad,
I turn and linger and hearken thy fairy strain,
Thou movest my soul in her mantle of twilight clad!

And she remembers dimly a spell remote,
Some life before the mist and vapor of Time,
When, as thou pourest thy heart-song out of thy throat,
Her mood was a melody springing pure and sublime.

O wild bird singing, singing after the rain,
So when the shower and veil of Time shall be past,
My soul will sing, and live as a song again,
And pour an inmost joy from her heart at last.

Ad Astra.

STARS, shine down on your small, sad lover,
Whose heart is heavy, whose eyes are wet!
Tell me that old, sweet comfort over,
Oft you whisper, and I forget.

Stars in the blue deep heavens thronging,
Still I pine for my fairy fate,
But the little heart grows weary with longing,
Beautiful dreams wax desolate!

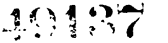
No more querulous I will wonder,—
This is the world where the Mind must grieve,
Chance and Order both clipping asunder
Fine-drawn webs that our spirits weave.

Well I know you can never bring me
My desire on this trammelled earth,
All those hopes which my fancies sing me
Well I know they are nothing worth.

Stars, shine down on your small sad lover,
  Stars so distant and clear and kind,
Whisper that old sweet comfort over,
  Always balm for the human mind!

Stars, in the sky you are weaving, weaving
  Beautiful destiny for my soul;
Far, far over this mortal grieving
  Lies the World which my Stars control.

What tho' my earthly web drop riven,
  Ever by Chance be my aim withstood?
Lead, ah, lead me, you Stars in Heaven!
  My desire is the Vast and Good.



THE END.